I: Good morning, and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols of the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you, and you can leave it at any time. I want to ask for your consent to record this conversation as that would make it easier for me to analyze the data later, and I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R5: Yes.

I: So, this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis. Do you have any questions before we start?

R5: No.

I: So, my first question is, how would you personally define sustainability?

R5: Hmm, that a hard question. I think sustainability is just being conscious of what you are consuming so that you are not being wasteful for no reason. I think the main part of it is that we need to try to make our resources last for as long as possible. So I think trying to recycle or trying not to waste water are some examples of sustainability.

I: Okay. And to what extent would you say that you're concerned about environmental issues? Are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R5: I would say I'm somewhat concerned about environmental issues. To be completely honest, I wouldn’t say that I have changed my whole lifestyle to be more sustainable, but I still try to incorporate small actions into my daily routine. So for example, I try not to take really long showers, I try to always make sure I turn off the lights in my apartment whenever I don’t need them, and I make sure to use a reusable water bottle. I also walk a lot, or I use public transport because I don’t have a car, so that helps with pollution I guess.

I: Okay. And what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? What do you pay attention to? Is it color, packaging material, any visuals?

R5: Honestly, the packaging itself isn’t too important to me when I am buying things, especially when it comes to food. I try to eat very healthy because I like working out and all that, so I tend to look at the calories and the ingredients. So if something is really good for me but does not

have nice packaging, that doesn't really bother me. I would rather pick the product that is healthier.

I: So you don't usually look at the packaging to make any decisions?

R5: Yes exactly. I mean of course everyone makes some impulsive purchases in the shop, but usually I would not pick something up just because it is green for example. If I was between two products, I am going to look at the nutrition label and the price to decide. I am a student, so I also prefer to choose the cheaper option most of the time.

I: Okay. And what kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packaged goods you've bought lately, like milk, veggies, frozen food?

R5: So usually I will buy things like milk, bread, crackers, some kind of meat like burger patties. Also, I buy those little yogurt cups, I like those a lot. What else? Oh some instant coffee and some veggie bags.

I: Okay. And among the products you mentioned, have you noticed if any of them were sustainable products?

R5: Hmm… I guess the crackers could be good because they come in a cardboard box. And also the instant coffee comes in a glass jar, but the lid is plastic I'm pretty sure, so I don't know how good that actually is. Other than that, I can't think of what else out of those would be considered sustainable.

I: Okay, and how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? What criteria would you use to think that a product is sustainable?

R5: I don't usually buy my products based on if they are sustainable or not, I know that sounds bad to say I guess. But I guess if I had to say some criteria, I would say the packaging material. So like trying not to use plastic, even though a lot of the time you don't really have a choice. Like the yogurt I mentioned earlier, they all come in the same plastic cups regardless of the brand, so with stuff like that it is hard to make a sustainable choice. Also any types of labels, so anything that clearly says that the packaging is recyclable or biodegradable or something like that would definitely be a good indicator.

I: Okay, so what elements of a product would make you think something is eco-friendlier than another, regardless of whether you buy it or not?

R5: I know there are certain catch phrases that companies will use, so that's why I try to always look at the actual nutrition label to see what is actually in the product. As I said, packaging material for sure. I know that from a marketing perspective there are like certain colors or like visuals that companies will use. So if something is green for example I know that's a common trend that I've noticed. I guess also if it looks a bit more… like less processed so more

homemade type packaging that always helps. Even though these companies are probably mass producing the products they make you think they are healthier and not so artificial.

I: Okay. Now I'm going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify each of them based on what you believe is the most and/or least sustainable, and provide a brief explanation as to why. I'll share my screen. Can you see the photos?

R5: Yes.

I: Great. Let's start with the first group, which consists of the same brand and product but different packaging materials. Which one do you think is the most sustainable, and why?

R5: I would pick the glass one on the left as the most sustainable option, since glass packaging is usually recyclable. The plastic one in the middle is definitely the worst one because that would go straight to the trash. I guess the can would also be good since it is also recyclable, but I believe glass is better.

I: Perfect. Now, what about these three?

R5: Again, I would pick the glass one as the most sustainable. It looks like the lid is aluminum as well so that means that the whole bottle should be recyclable. Although I feel like these bottles are harder to find in stores now, so I think the can is the most common one now and that one is definitely better than the plastic one.

I: Okay. Out of these three?

R5: I would say the one on the right, I am assuming it's also glass. That type of jar also looks like you could maybe reuse it. I don't know, maybe put some leftovers in it or something I'm not sure. For example, I like making overnight oats so I like saving little jars like that for making oats. I guess the one on the left is also reusable but it is plastic so that makes it slightly worse.

I: Alright, then here we have the second category, which is different brands but the same packaging materials. So among these three, which one would you consider the most sustainable?

R5: I would say the one on in the middle [Chobani] is the most sustainable. The one on the left, I can't tell if the lid is plastic or not. Although I guess if it was plastic then you could maybe reuse it so I don't know. But the Chobani one caught my eye first. I like that it says only natural ingredients on the top.

I: And what about these three?

R5: I don't know, they all look the exact same to me.

I: If you had to choose one?

R5: Hmm, I guess I would pick the one on the right [Minute Maid] because it looks like the ingredients might be better. The label on the lid says non-GMO and 100% pure squeezed so that one might be less processed out of the three. But I would honestly look at the label to see which one was healthier, like less sugar and less ingredients in this case.

I: Okay. Now, out of these three?

R5: For this one, I think the most sustainable option would be the one on the left [Land O'Lakes]. The packaging is cardboard, so that's good, and I like that it says farmer owned.

I: And which one would you say is the least sustainable?

R5: The one on the right [President] looks really artificial to me. I don't know maybe it's the colors or something but the other two look a lot more appealing.

I: Great. And how about these three?

R5: I would say the one in the middle [Bonne Maman] looks the best to me. The other two look like they would have a lot of sugar and added stuff, but the one in the middle looks more natural and homemade to me. The packaging looks like the type of thing you would find in a farmer's market or something.

I: Makes sense. Lastly, out of these three?

R5: With these three, I would actually choose the one in the middle [Wheat Thins], just because I have bought those ones before and I know that they are good. I also like that it says stuff like no artificial flavors or 100% whole grain. Those types of things immediately catch my attention.

I: Okay, and then out of these three?

R5: I think the one on the right [Seventh Generation] looks like the best one. The other two look really generic to me. I feel like the right one is at least trying to be good with the labels, I can't read them very well but I can see a recycle symbol and some other things on the bottom. The packaging also makes it look more natural over the super bright colors of the other ones.

I: Alright, and then this is the last group, which is of different brands and packaging materials. Which one did you pick as the most sustainable?

R5: I would probably choose the one on the left side [On The Border] since it looks like it is a glass jar, so it is recyclable. The one on the right is the worst [Pace] because it uses a lot of plastic. At least the one in the middle could maybe be reused.

I: Got it. And among these three?

R5: I think I would actually go with the one in the middle [Honey Bunches of Oats]. It seems to use less material, even though it is plastic. I don't know, maybe I am biased because I like that cereal.

I: Okay. And what about these three?

R5: I think I would choose the one in the middle [Horizon Organic] as the most sustainable. I know that there is a lot of controversy around FairLife, so I would not pick that one, and also because it has a plastic bottle. The Horizon one is cardboard so I guess that one should be recyclable. Oh, I guess the one on the right is really good as well. Hmm… ok I think I will change my answer. The one on the right [Volleman's] is the best because it is glass, then the Horizon, and then the FairLife.

I: Alright. And lastly, these three?

R5: Among these three, I would say the one in the middle (Rise) looks the most sustainable since it seems to be a can. The one on the left [Califia Farms] looks like it is using a ton of plastic, it looks super bulky.

I: Makes sense. I just have one final question after seeing those. So did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands that we reviewed today? And in case you're not familiar with greenwashing it's defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact. So based on the brands we saw did you think any of them were kind of trying to greenwash or intentionally make an impression of being more sustainable than they might be?

R5: Yeah, for sure. I definitely think some of the brands were using greenwashing. I think with some of the companies, like the dish soap for example, they were very clearly using pictures of leaves and fruit and stuff on purpose to make it look better. Like the soap could all be the exact same I don't know, but the pictures and colors made the one on the right look better. Or I guess even the jam. Like that jar I am sure doesn't come from a farmer's market but they want you to think that it was homemade.

I: Perfect thank you for participating in my study. I appreciate your help!

R5: No problem you're welcome.